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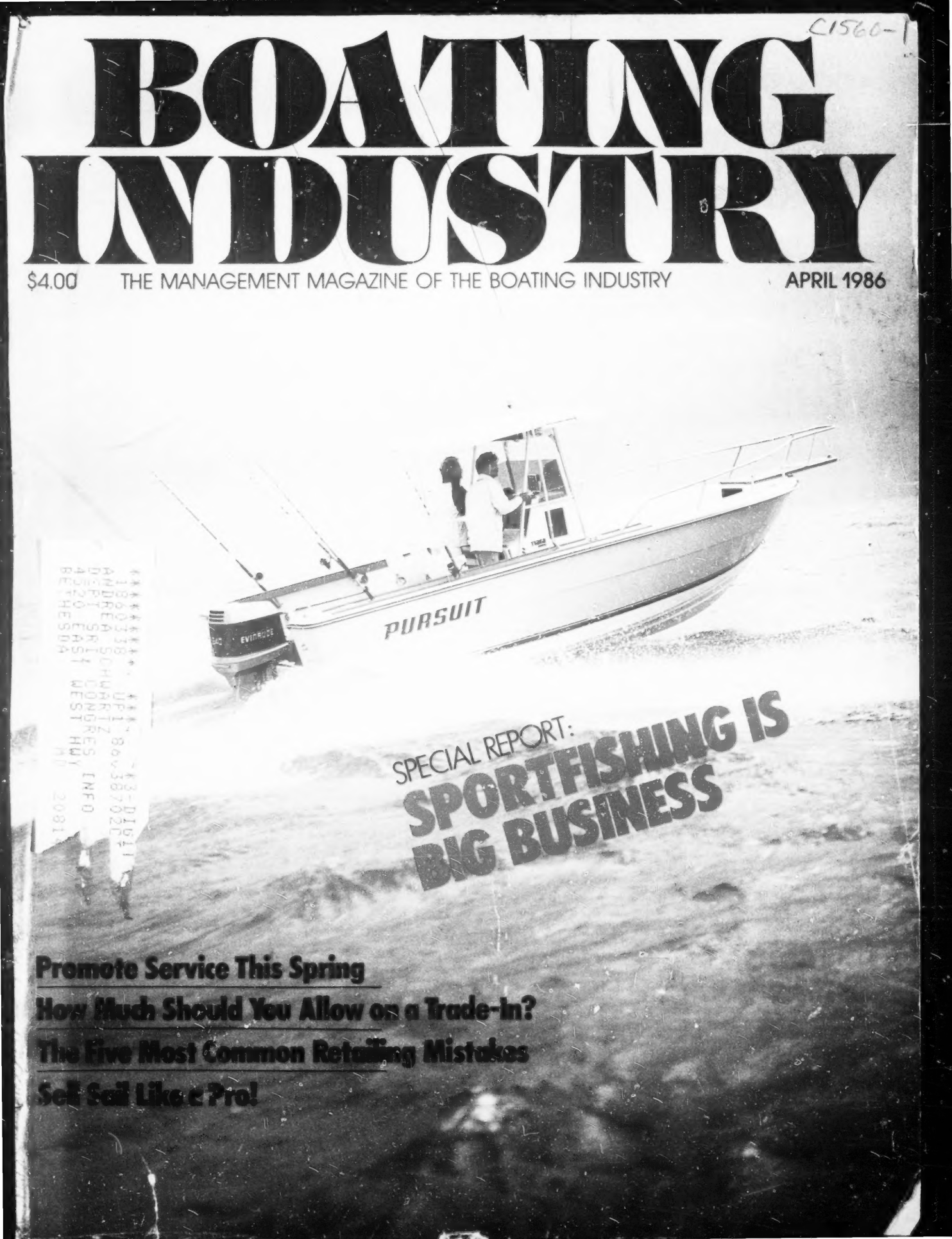

SPECIAL REPORT:

SPORTFISHING IS BIG BUSINESS

Promote Service This Spring

How Much Should You Allow on a Trade-In?

The Five Most Common Retailing Mistakes

Sell Sail Like a Pro!

BOATING INDUSTRY

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As the market for fishing machines continues to boom, the number of builders competing for the sportfisherman's dollars continues to grow. Product offered today ranges from the simple and practical, to the near-decadent. PHOTO COURTESY EVINRUDE

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58 **How Much Should You Allow on a Trade-In?**

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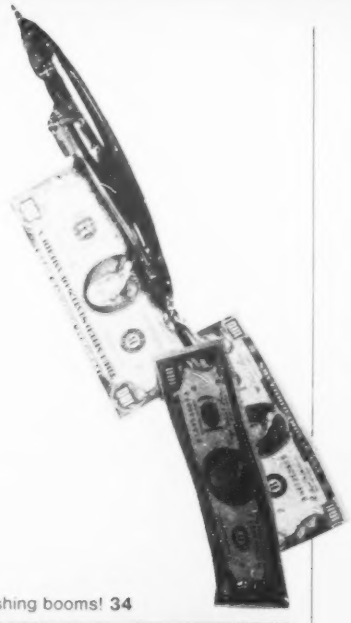

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Sportfishing:

CATCHING THE BIG BUCKS

BY CARL WEINSCHENK

Sportfishing boats are the stuff of which dreams are made. The picture of a speeding craft topped by a tower, rods bending in the wind and wake spreading for what seems like miles from the stern is one of the purest images produced by the huge pleasure marine industry in this country. And that dream, because of a mature industry segment with niches for rich to (relatively) poor, is available to more people than ever before.

Though it garners much of the publicity, sportfishing is a relatively limited market. Its members are diehard fishermen and women; often, they are seasoned boat owners who have traded *down* in size to get what they feel is their optimal fishing machine. These people know what they want, are not fooled by slick advertising and have the money to get what they want. It is a dream more and more people are subscribing to.

There are several general market conditions that are helping to expand the sportfishing market in particular, and the industry in general. They include low interest rates, the overall health of the economy and the easy availability of fuel. Reasons specific to sportfishing include, according to Eddie Smith, president of Grady White Boats, the advent of better, more safely designed hulls, more reliable, sophisticated engines and better, affordable electronics. The end result of these improvements is the ability of mid-sized and small boats to go farther out to sea. "Ten years ago," said Smith, "if you went ten miles off the North Carolina Coast, you'd see nothing but 50 foot yachts. Now, you'll see a flotilla of smaller boats."

The sportfishing boat market has several things in common with the bass boat segment. Both are expanding geographically through the promotion of tournaments. Sportfishing, in addition, is benefiting from the re-emergence of the Great Lakes as viable fishing grounds. Both have seen the entry of many companies into competition for the recreational dollar. Both have enjoyed optimum conditions for several years. Though this is obviously good, care must be taken not to make the assumption that times will not change.

Pleasure boating, which is a cyclical business, has been enjoying halcyon days since the advent of the Reagan administration. The future is never certain; the conditions that triggered the great gains elaborated upon in this article may well continue. Caution may be the key, however, because economic forces are fickle and change quickly, especially when an administration is nearing its final days.

Graham Flanagan, the president of Sea Ox (Greenville, North Carolina) a division of North American Fiberglass, indicated wholesale value of company sales rose 28% in 1985. Unit sales were 14% ahead. The increases are not expected to stop. "We think 1986 will be a barnburner," said Flanagan. He estimates unit sales may rise as much as 15% for the company, which will produce about 575 boats in 1986. Fourteen new dealers have been added since November, bringing the total to about 60. Flanagan believes in assigning "a pretty good size territory" to each. "To stack dealers hurts in the long run," he said.

Those dealers will be selling two similar new boats in 1986. The 23 and 200 Cuddy have 6½-foot-long insulated fish boxes, a heavy duty bow pulpit and increased cabin size.

Bill Erickson, the senior vice president of marketing at Wellcraft (Sarasota, Florida) indicated that net sales dollars were up approximately 30% in 1985. He feels the rise is attributable in part to the increase in fishable areas such as Lake Erie, which was lost to fishermen due to pollution for many years. All the coastal regions were strong for the company, he said, with New

Conditions continue to favor one of the most visible of industry markets. Early results from boat shows have manufacturers thinking of a fourth consecutive year of growth.

England weighing in with the best showing. A gathering of strength was also seen in the midwest.

Erickson said that the most popular boats for 1985 were the 2800 Coastal, the 230 Center Console and the 20 foot dual console. New in 1986 is the 34 foot Scarab Super Sport.

The dealer network, which is now at about 150, is reporting sales ahead of last year for the first two months of 1986. Though Erickson said it was too early to comment, he notes that original forecasts for this year were "very, very optimistic."

Topaz, (Owings, Maryland), is another company that boasted of an increase in 1985. According to Don Molter, the director of marketing and sales, the company's five models scored a "sizeable increase" last year. He indicated that the gains have carried over to 1986. The first quarter of the new sales year, in fact, beat the same period last year by an even 50%. Molter feels people are much more willing to invest for value. "Quality is now selling," he said. This is good for Topaz, a company that sees itself as heading toward the upper end. Molter said Topaz is becoming much more aggressive, an attempt that has resulted in a back-order position between October, 1985 and last month. The company has a dealer market of 15, which is strongest in Florida and the northern mid-Atlantic states. Molter indicated three dealership spots—two in the Great Lakes region and one on the west coast—are open.

"I think Topaz will have a very good year. We're not anticipating any problem through this model year at all. We don't see any softness in our market."

Wahoo! (Ashland, Virginia) has been making sportfishing boats since 1983. This, of course, means that the increase of between 300 and 400% in sales and the addition of more than 40 dealers should be seen in perspective. Even with those qualifications, however, the numbers are impressive. The company is back-ordered for eight weeks and, during the last year, has been as many as 17 weeks behind.

"We've kind of got a niche, and have really taken advantage of it," said Ray Curry, the president and owner. Curry, who is an industry veteran, credits his long retail experience as the key to the boat's functional and popular design. The two new boats for 1986 are the 14.3 (with a 5 foot 10 inch beam) and the 21.2 (with an 8 foot beam). He markets to second and third-time boat buyers, people who in some cases are coming

PHOTO: SEA OX

Sea Ox (model 230C, above) and Wahoo! (18.5 Offshore, below) are both experiencing good years. In 1985, Sea Ox sales rose 28%. The market has been so good that Wahoo! is considering entering the Japanese market.

PHOTO: WAHOO!

PHOTO: WELLCRAFT

Wellcraft's 2800 Coastal was one of the company's biggest winners in 1985. Senior vice president Bill Erickson is encouraged by 1986 show results.

down from bigger boats. He feels the market is still operating on the pent-up demand of the late 1970's. The extent to which good fortune is impacting Wahoo! is evident in plans for a new factory in California, which Curry said will put the company in position for an expected entrance into the Japanese market and increased activity on the west coast.

Murray Chris-Craft (Bradenton, Florida) has many of its approximately 175 dealers east of the Mississippi River. It is safe to say most of these carry some of the company's 17 or 18 sportfishing boats. The model counts for about 25% of the company's business. Tim Clarke, the vice president of advertising and public relations, indicated that demand for sportfishing boats is strong, but does not outstrip demand for other types of boats. He indicated trends are toward bigger craft (as evidenced by the introduction of a 58-footer), boats with higher performance and craft designed for multiple uses. The 42 Sport Fish is a redone craft featuring a new deck, a more powerful engine and a reduced price. Chris Craft will also introduce a new 25-foot center console craft during the summer.

Bertram (Miami, Florida) marked an increase of 40% between 1984 and 1985. Jill Shave, the manager of market services and sales promotion, indicated that 1986 expectations were "absolutely outstanding. At the New York and Miami shows we broke all records by over 50%. We sold 54 units retail at the Miami Show."

Some of the interest in Bertram product was generated by the redesigned 33' and 46' convertible. The company also premiered its 37' craft.

In addition to making significant dollar profits last year, Bertram was able to increase market share, even in a crowded field, and expects to be able to do so again in 1986.

When other sportfishing boat manufacturers talk about quality, phrases such as "like Grady White" or "our company and Eddie Smith's" are common.

Smith, who is the company president and one of the industry's leading spokespeople, said that Grady-White's dollar volume sales were up between 10 and 15% in 1985. He indicated unit sales were equal to record 1984 figures. The two facts taken together indicate sales of larger craft rose. The consistency between the two years in volume sales was attained by design, Smith said. He added that the potential exists for 45% growth in 1986, but a desire not to overextend will keep gains more modest. "We're growing as fast as we want to," he said. "We could make millions of dollars if we added another shift." Grady White is controlling its growth, and with it its hard-won reputation. They will continue, according to Smith, to do what has gotten them to the top. They will build—and sell—20% more boats in 1986 than last year. An indication of the good times prevailing in Greenville, North Carolina, is the company's back-order position.

The dealer network of about 100 is strongest on the East and Gulf Coasts with a newfound strength in the Great Lakes and, to a lesser degree, on the west coast.

Angler (Miami), is expecting a "marvelous" year, according to company president Roger Smith. His assessment is based on boat show results. Smith indicated that 1985 sales beat the previous year's by 41%. The hikes are being led by new 20 and 24-foot models. Both feature plentiful inside storage areas and new center consoles.

The company finds its greatest strength in the eastern half of the country, said Smith. He indicated that Angler, which builds 17 to 27-foot craft, is saltwater-oriented.

Jack Albertson, the vice president of sales and marketing for Aquasport (Hialeah, Florida) said that the company is expecting a sizeable increase over 1985. "We are prepared for a good year," said Albertson. Among the reasons for the expected growth are low fuel prices, easy fuel availability, low interest rates and the lower returns on various investment funds such as money markets. In addition, he credits an increase in advertising and proliferation of tournaments with bringing new people into the sport. These factors combined with the comeback of the Great Lakes has put Aquasport in a good position.

The company is offering three new hulls: the 371, 25 and 22 Osprey center consoles. They offer an "old New England-style sheer line," said Albertson. The company's 92 dealers are also offered convenient prerigging and a line of boats covering all types of sportfishing instead of

centering on a limited scope.

Neale Attenborough, the new director of marketing for Boston Whaler (Rockland, Massachusetts) saw about a 20% sales rise in 1985. He indicated that the company, whose approximate 30 sportfish models comprise half its line, has had the 20% increase as an average of each of the last three years. The introduction of a 27-foot, wide beam model on the bigger end and renovations to the smaller members of the line has added to base business.

The 27-footer, which saw its first full year on the market in 1985, has a 10-foot beam, a cuddy cabin, 115 square feet of cockpit space, center console configuration and various option possibilities that comprise what, according to Attenborough, is an "all out fishing boat." He indicated that Boston Whaler's business is primarily on the coasts.

Pat Brown, the advertising director of Dusky (Dania, Florida), said 1985 business was approximately equal to 1984, which was very good. The new year, she said, "is going to be a whopper." Brown indicated that, if January trends keep up, 1986 could produce a 20% jump. The new boat for Dusky, introduced at the Miami show, was a 20-foot walkaround. The big mover, however, was the 25 footer, which comes with a tower and twin 225 horsepower loop charged Evinrudes on Dusky Drive brackets. "People are going to small boats because they have smaller cars," said Brown. "But they still want a cabin." The company, which manufactures 150 boats a year and has its main strength in Florida, sold nine in Miami (seven 25 footers, one 23 footer and one 20 footer).

Mako (Miami) was up about 10% over 1984. Three new boats were introduced: The Mako 231 (with an 8 foot beam and center console), the 261 (8½ foot beam and center console) and the 248 (8½ foot beam, walkaround). The most interesting feature of the center console models is that they have C-PACs, or portable consoles that can be carried away like a briefcase.

Mako has about 80 dealers primarily centered in Florida. The company is also strong on the rest of the east coast. Bruce Huppert, until recently the vice president of sales and marketing, said that eight to ten boats a day can be produced.

The company manufactures fishing boats from 17 to 28 feet. They cover the eastern half of the nation with 27 tournaments, in locales as varied as Massachusetts to Key West and Texas to Michigan.

Hatteras, of High Point, North Carolina, followed the example of the rest of the industry and had a good year. According to Bryant Phillips, the company's manager of marketing services, Hatteras has experienced an upturn every year since 1982. The company is different in that they do not use a model year per se, instead opting to add, remove or adapt models as the need arises. During the next calendar year, however, big profits are expected from the new Hatteras 65 Convertible and the new 41 Convertible (premiered at the New York Boat Show where four were sold). The new models feature a "contemporizing" of both the interior and exterior and a "rakish" new look.

Phillips indicated that the company is expecting continued success. In addition to the new models, the 45, 52 and 60 Convertibles are continuing to move well.

Tom Calhoun, the director of sales and marketing for Luhrs (Marlboro, New Jersey) is encouraged by the response that greeted the builder's reentry into the market. The original company was founded by Henry Luhrs during the 1930s. He sold it in the latter 60s to Bangor Punta, where it languished and eventually stopped production. Meanwhile, sons Warren and John acquired Silverton in the late 70s. Early in the 80s, Silverton reacquired some of Luhrs' assets (mostly the name and trademarks).

Until one year ago, according to Calhoun, the new Luhrs was a one boat line. The 340 was joined by the 342 at the Miami show in 1985, by the 290 late last summer and by the 400 at this year's Miami get together. Production on the latter will begin in May.

It is hard to use the traditional yard sticks in judging a company that is just starting out. Calhoun says the dealer network of between 20 and 25 is strongest in New Jersey. A flybridge-topped version of the 290 and 37-foot convertible are on the drawing board. □

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY ASSOCIATED WITH SALTWATER SPORTFISHING IN 1985

	Retail Sales	
Purchase	1980 Dollars	1985 Dollars
Fishing Tackle	184.8	241.3
Boats	284.1	371.0
Motors	55.4	72.3
Trailers	18.1	23.6
Marinas	470.4	614.3
Charter/Headboat	149.4	195.1
Food	548.9	716.8
Restaurants	192.8	251.8
Lodging	184.7	241.2
Pub. Transportation	70.8	92.5
Priv. Transportation	539.8	704.9
Bait	290.1	378.8
Boat Fuel	760.2	992.7
Boat Insurance	54.5	71.2
Other	172.2	224.9
Total	3976.2	5192.5

These economic measures relate to the activity that takes place in the national economy as a consequence of saltwater fishing in the states. Retail sales represent the amounts paid by the end user for goods and services in various sectors. Sales estimates are shown in both 1980 and 1985 dollars, based on the consumer price index.
SOURCE: SPORT FISHING INSTITUTE, Washington, DC

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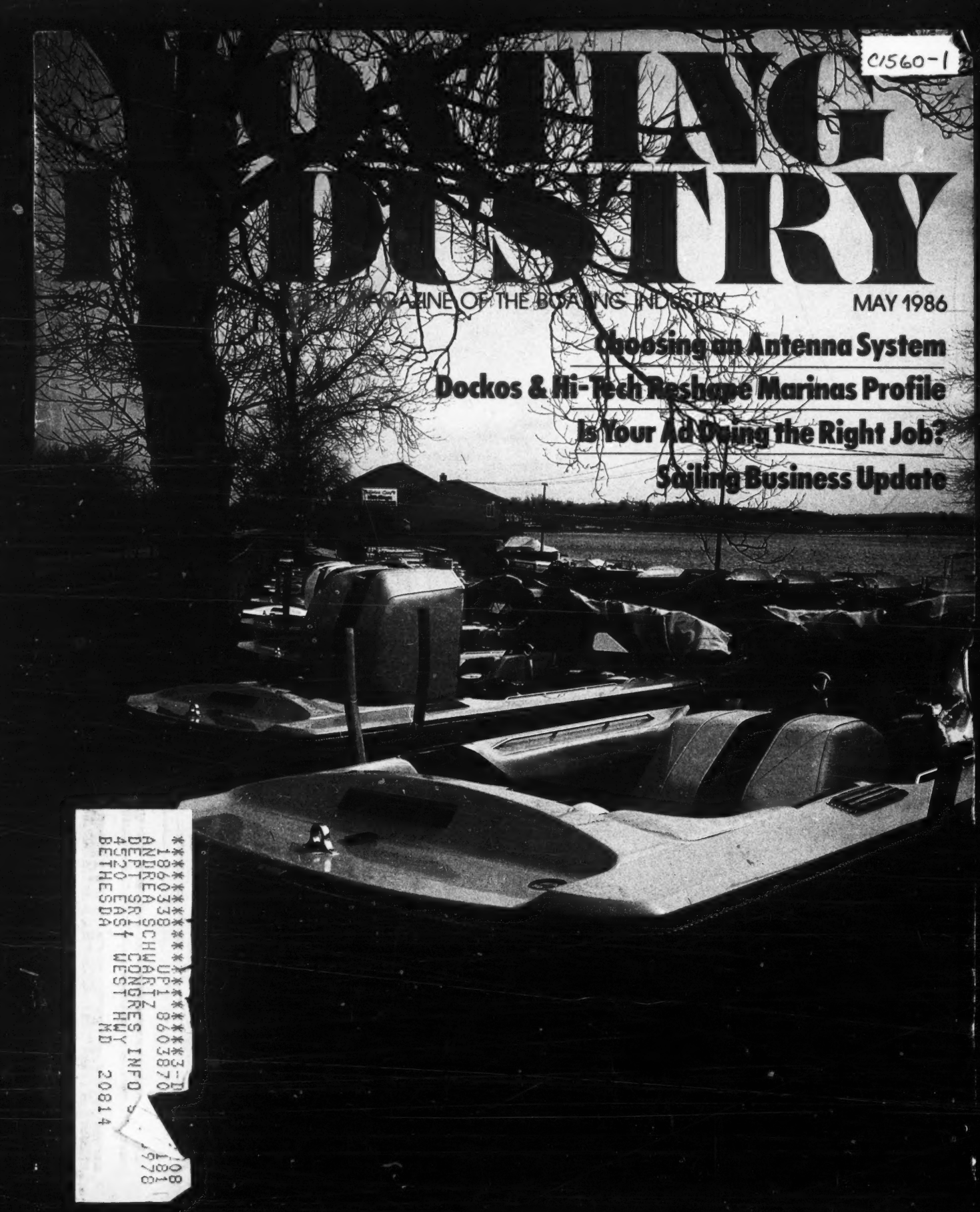

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SKI WAYS TO PROFIT

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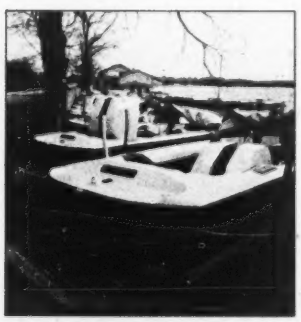

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Silver Spray Sports in Fenton, Michigan has become one of Correct Craft's most profitable ski boat dealerships in a scant four years. PHOTO BOUNDAS

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Banter about sailing's progress seems to focus on the actual vitality of the much-heralded comeback of this market segment.

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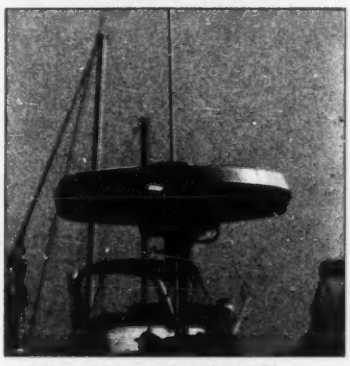


matching up the right antenna **50**

Water Ski Industry Broadens its Markets

New broad-based industry efforts are geared to attract newcomers to the sport. Meanwhile, water ski manufacturers continue to expect a rise in demand for both recreational and high-performance water skis.

Photo: Connelly Skis

BY JOHN DE GASPARI

Industry experts have described the water ski industry as being something of an iceberg. While sales of both top-of-the-line "high tech" skis and recreational skis are significant—and growing—an enormous market segment, the beginner, has largely been ignored.

Now several projects are underway within the industry to tap the large beginner market, and attract new people to the sport. Two efforts are being targeted to younger people. One is the 1986 Water Ski Summer Games, co-sponsored by the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), the American Water Ski Association (AWSA), and the Water Ski Industry Association (WSIA). The other is a joint effort of the WSIA and the Boy Scouts of America to develop a water ski program for scouts.

The Water Ski Summer Games is a unique pilot program to instruct first-time skiers. Slated to begin this summer, the program consists of a series of 12 water ski clinics to be held in four locations across the US: Houston, TX; Elkhart, IN; Cypress Gardens, FL; and San Diego, CA.

The purpose of the clinics and tournaments will be to teach participants how to water ski, and to progressively bring them to a point where they can compete on a very grass roots, elementary level, according to Jim Hotchkiss, executive director of WSIA, based in North Palm Beach, FL. "The WSIA, this year more than any other year, is spending most of its efforts on youth participation in the sport."

The uniqueness of the program as a broad-based effort was emphasized by Duke Cullimore, public relations director of the AWSA, Winter Haven, FL. "It's never been done in the U.S. before. Clinics have been held by some manufacturers in the past. But this is an effort on the part of the sport's governing body,

which is the AWSA, the industry, which is the WSIA, and the AAU, which has a long history in the development of amateur sports."

Both Hotchkiss and Cullimore are optimistic about the pilot program, which will be evaluated upon its completion. Pending the results of the pilot, plans are to expand it to 24 cities across the U.S. in 1987.

While sales of high-performance skis have not grown as fast as those of recreational skis, they continue to grow because of design improvements. Skiers want to keep current on new designs.

The other major involvement is between the WSIA and the Boy Scouts of America. According to Hotchkiss, for several years the WSIA has been assisting about 100 Boy Scout Councils nationwide with water ski programs. Often this support has been in the form of donated and loaned equipment.

"This year, we are stepping up our support dramatically, as we will do in succeeding years," he says. The program will begin with a two-day water ski clinic to be held this month at Camp Strake in Houston, TX, which Hotchkiss considers to have a model instruction program.

"It's not very different from what we are doing with the AAU," claims Hotchkiss. "But it's specifically designed for the Boy Scout program." Water Ski Program directors and instructors from 16 Councils in the southwest region will be invited to Camp Strake during the clinic to learn methods of teaching beginners how to water ski and enjoy the experience. The WSIA will also produce a 15-minute video of the Camp Strake program, and will distribute cassettes to other Councils with water ski programs.

Like the Water Ski Summer Games, this is a broad-based effort. The Boy Scouts of America has over 4 million participants.

Hotchkiss sees a real need for these types of programs in the industry. One annual survey conducted by the WSIA shows an 11% growth in water ski sales in 1985 over the previous year. "The growth is not all that dramatic, and it doesn't make manufacturers as happy as they would like to be," he says. "They know that there is a potentially enormous market out there."

He feels that the sales of low-cost skis do not occupy as large a part of the market as they really should. "The sales are significant, but really, the dramatic, large part of sales should be in those beginning combination pairs, and that's not the case right now." With the strengthening of the lower end of the market, the higher end should benefit shortly thereafter, he maintains.

Another indicator of the popularity of the sport is the number of water ski clinics and tournaments held. There are currently about 350 sanctioned water ski tournaments held annually in the U.S. Many of these are produced by the more than 450 water ski clubs across the country. The number of water ski clubs and tournaments has been rising over the last 15 years.

"The number of clubs has increased over the last seven or eight years by about 100," claims Cullimore. While the growth of clubs and tournaments has not been rapid, it is nonetheless expanding with the public's awareness of water skiing as a competitive activity, and new clubs are formed yearly.

A major segment of participants in the sport continues to be the recreational skier. "Water skiing, by its very nature, has always been a family activity. It continues to grow as a family activity," says Cullimore. Figures from different sources on the number of recreational skiers in the U.S. vary from about 12.2 million to 17 million.

One manufacturer of high-performance and high-end recreational skis is Connelly Skis, Lynnwood, WA. According to advertising director Scott Logan, sales last year were up 20% over the year before. Expected growth of sales this year is 10% to 12%.

The fastest growing segments of Connelly's product line are fiberglass recreational combos, which retail from $165, and recreational slaloms, some models of which are priced under $200. One reason for the strength of the recreational market is the willingness of the consumer to pay for a quality recreational ski, says Logan.

Logan agrees with Cullimore that water ski clubs—both recreationally and competitively oriented—play an important role in bringing new people to the sport. Water ski clubs have also helped manufacturers in the sense that they have influence in their local markets, he claims.

Connelly's reputation as a high-performance ski manufacturer has attracted beginning skiers to its line. "We get our share of beginners mainly because of the reputation we have with high-performance skis. Somebody in a boat will see people with Connelly skis and wonder if we make anything for beginners. We have found that we haven't had to aggressively market toward the beginner, because we have had so much of that trickle-down effect." Logan also claims that stores have been supportive in steering beginners to Connelly skis.

Connelly remains a high-end oriented manufacturer, with 50% of its sales in single slalom water skis that retail at $295 and up. "Our image was built on high-tech, high-perfor-

mance products," says Logan. Of its high-performance line, Connelly markets models with graphite added and with Kevlar added. Kevlar skis retail from about $270 and the most expensive graphite skis start at about $400. Of high-performance sales, says Logan, 18% are skis that retail from $400 and up, 20% are in the $380 model, and 20% are in a model that sells for $360. The balance is in the $275 model.

Unlike the case for recreational skis, high-performance skiers will tend to go to a pro shop to buy their skis because of the expert advice available from sales staffs there.

"The high-performance segment is not growing as fast as the recreational fiberglass segment," says Logan. "But it is continuing to grow because technology and ski design are getting better every year—both ours and our competitors'. People who are in the market for $300 and $400 skis want to keep current on the newest designs. If you convince them that what you are carrying will improve their performance—ski better—they will buy it."

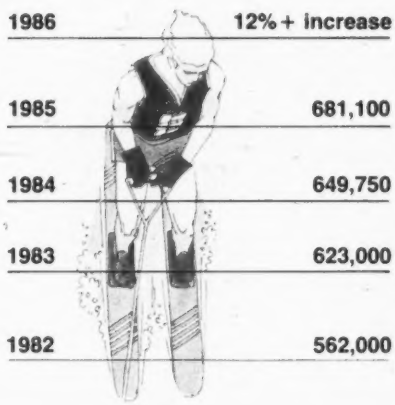
The tendency to "trade up" is a strong element in water ski purchases. Also, discounting plays an important role in water ski purchases. "I don't think that anyone has paid full price on a pair of water skis in a while," says Logan. "By the same token, the manufacturer has responded to that by offering bigger discounts, so that dealer profit margins have stayed up there."

One comment that Connelly has received from dealers is that so many different ski models are priced so closely together that it has made it difficult for consumers to make buying decisions. "All of our slaloms are made of completely different designs," claims Logan. "We try to educate both consumers and salespeople as to what those differences are. We also try to show them what type of skiing style each of our models is made for."

Connelly provides videos to dealers that explain the differences between models of skis. The manufacturer also provides dealers with technical manuals that explain how the products are designed.

Another manufacturer trying to appeal to the higher end of the recreation market is Wellington Puritan, Madison, GA. This year is the second season since it has reintroduced its Taperflex ski, which had been off the market for the previous four years. The company has been pleased with its efforts to get the consumer to recognize the Taperflex name, according to Zack McLanahan, Wellington-Puritan national sales manager.

UNIT SALES OF WATER SKIS



Water ski unit sales: 1985: 681,100; 1984: 649,750; 1983: 623,000; 1982: 562,106. Increases for 1986 may surpass industry estimates of 6% to 12%.

Part of its program is to re-introduce its ski as part of a family of related products, including ski jackets, ski tow ropes, gloves, etc. "We are also adding more dealers and more distributors, and coupling that with more retail and consumer-oriented ads," he says.

The Wellington Puritan ski line appeals to a broad range of recreational skiers, claims McLanahan. "We have two combo models: a beginner combo pair and a more advanced, deluxe combo pair. And we have three different levels of slaloms: beginner, intermediate, and expert. Generally, we appeal more to the high-end recreational skier, up to the beginning competitor," says McLanahan. He doesn't see the line as competition oriented as yet.

"We want to pick up the family of skiers who are out of the wood range, decided they like the sport, and are going to invest their money in good equipment." The product line ranges from a low of $170 suggested retail to a high of about $280.

Wellington Puritan is also involved in the manufacture of wood skis. "There's a tremendous amount of wood skis being sold out there, although the number of manufacturers in that market has dwindled somewhat," says McLanahan.

One reason for the decline of the wood ski market is that the prices of fiberglass skis have come down to where they are so competitive with wood, that consumers are opting for fiberglass skis. "There's no doubt that fiberglass is cutting into the market for wood skis. Basically, those buyers who are left are people going through mass merchandisers and catalog showrooms. It's been pretty much taken out of the dealer and the specialty dealer," he explains, although he adds that many dealers still carry wood skis.

One way that Wellington Puritan has been thinking of promoting its skis is through ski clinics. "We've looked into a lot of ski clinics," says McLanahan. One possibility is running, in conjunction with major dealers and distributors, a learn-to-ski weekend, with a trained professional staff giving free or low-priced ski lessons. The purpose of such a clinic would be two-fold: to promote the company's product, and to attract newcomers to the sport.

McLanahan agrees with others in the industry that ski clubs play an important role in promoting water skiing. "A person who stays with the sport, who works his way up, will become more involved with clubs in areas that have them."

But he adds that the biggest market is still the weekend boater who goes out with the family to ski. "We want to align ourselves pretty much with the family oriented skier."

All of which is not to slight the importance of the competition market, or to underestimate the tendency of consumers to trade up. "For every competitor, there are several hundred recreational folks who look forward to being a competitor one day," says McLanahan. From that point, Wellington Puritan may move into the competition market.

In all, industry spokesmen agree that the outlook for recreational and competition water skiing—especially with efforts to bring new participants into the sport—is bright. □